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THE IMPACT OF STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT ON AFRICAN
AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE SUCCESS IN COLLEGE

by
Keron A. Piper

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration
of
The Graduate School
at
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Approved by _____
Dr. Burton R. Sisco

Date Approved May 20, 2008

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ABSTRACT

Keron A. Piper

THE IMPACT OF STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT ON AFRICAN AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE SUCCESS IN COLLEGE

2007/08

Dr. Burton R. Sisco

Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The primary purpose of the study was to investigate student involvement and engagement levels and its impact on various aspects of student life on selected African American students at Rowan University. Data were collected by means of a Likert-style survey. In addition, a focus group was conducted consisting of students from the survey sample. Data analysis from the survey suggests that faculty involvement and active/collaborative learning in the classroom are very important to academic success in college. Holding an internship, making class presentations, and tutoring other students were reported as having a positive impact on GPA. From the focus group, students reported feeling lower expectations from instructors which serve as a distraction. Also, it was reported that younger students used peers as a source of influence and advisement while the older students looked to faculty and advisors for advice.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is viewed in the United States as desirable and something that should be accessible to everyone. In American society, most people find it difficult to advance professionally without some form of college degree or specialized training after high school. In fact, those who do not continue to pursue college are often ostracized for a lack of success and this is seen as a reason for failed achievement. For some races and genders, there appear to be factors at play that have a significant impact on the goal of pursuing further education.

Statement of the Problem

In the 1960s, the gender gap between African American women and African American men enrolled in college was about 22,000 in favor of black women. During the 1970s the gap began to grow substantially. By 1994, the gap had widened to 300,000 and continues to grow today at an alarming rate (Slater, 1994). If this trend continues, there are many dire implications that will arise in the African American community.

Research studies completed in the past point to many reasons for the growing gender gap among African Americans. The majority of the studies were conducted on African American high school and middle school students, such as studies by Davis & Jordan (1994) and Garibaldi (1992). Fewer studies have examined African American college students to explore the factors that aided their enrollment into higher education.

In addition, when examining student engagement theory, few studies have investigated the impact of student engagement in African American students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of different levels of student involvement in African American students. The study investigated engagement in different areas of college life and its relationships with the satisfaction and academic experiences of the students' college career. Of particular interest was the comparison of the African American females to African American males. Researching African American students in all classes in higher education sought to provide a better understanding of involvement and achievement at different stages in the students' academic careers. The variations of the participants' responses between genders could potentially provide better insight on the disparity.

Significance of the Study

Researching African American students at Rowan University could provide a deeper understanding of how student engagement impacts personal success in college. Moreover, by examining these factors, empirical information could be disseminated to aid not only incoming college freshmen but also African American males in secondary schools. A potential benefit could be a reduction in the gender disparity between African American males and females.

Assumptions and Limitations

The study assumed that the subjects had a clear understanding of the problem that was investigated. It is also possible that subjects may not have responded honestly and truthfully to the questions provided in the survey and the interview. This study was limited to only African American male and females at Rowan University during the spring semester of 2008. If all African American students at higher education institutions were surveyed, results could be more revealing. A sample of convenience was employed which resulted in a low response rate. In addition, the participants volunteered to participate in the study, so it is possible that those who volunteered might have a possible bias towards the issue. There is also potential for researcher bias to associate the results of the study to previous literature. Because an interview was employed in the study, there could be a tendency to prompt certain responses.

Operational Definitions

1. Academic Success/Achievement: The ability to accomplish the goals individuals set for themselves, i.e. college graduation.
2. African American Female Freshmen: African American female undergraduate students at Rowan University enrolled in their first year of college during the spring 2008 semester.
3. African American Female Juniors: African American female undergraduate students at Rowan University enrolled in their third year of college during the spring 2008 semester.

4. African American Female Sophomores: African American female undergraduate students at Rowan University enrolled in their second year of college during the spring 2008 semester.
5. African American Female Seniors: African American female undergraduate students at Rowan University enrolled in their fourth year of college during the spring 2008 semester.
6. African American Male Freshmen: African American male undergraduate students at Rowan University enrolled in their first year of college during the spring 2008.
7. African American Male Juniors: African American male undergraduate students at Rowan University enrolled in their third year of college during the spring 2008.
8. African American Male Sophomores: African American male undergraduate students at Rowan University enrolled in their second year of college during the spring 2008.
9. African American Male Seniors: African American male undergraduate students at Rowan University enrolled in their fourth year of college during the spring 2008.
10. Factors: Any causes that impede students' academic success or achievement.
11. Retention: The act of students progressing to the next level of education in schooling.
12. Student Engagement: The extent to which students are involved in their campus culture and learning environment that promotes success.

13. Student Involvement: The amount interaction a student has with different aspects of their college experience, i.e. social clubs, faculty, other students, etc.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What do selected undergraduate African American students report on their involvement and engagement patterns at Rowan University?
2. Are there any significant relationships among the subjects' cumulative GPA and involvement/engagement patterns?
3. Are there any significant relationships in the African American male and female students' responses to the survey items?
4. What do the results of the Focus Group say about the involvement and engagement levels of African American undergraduate students at Rowan University?
5. What recommendations do African American undergraduates make on involving and engaging all students at Rowan University?

Overview of the Report

Chapter two provides a review of the literature related to the study. Included is a history of the issue, trends, and future implications. Results from previous research are discussed in this section.

Chapter three describes the methodology of the study along with procedures for data collecting. Included is a description of the population and demographics, data instruments used, and analysis of the data.

Chapter four present the findings of the study. This chapter provides answers to the research questions posed in the introduction. Survey data are summarized using narrative and statistical analysis of the responses from the subjects of the study. Data from the focus group are presented in narrative and thematic form.

Chapter five summarizes and discusses major findings of the study and presents conclusions from the results with suggestions for practice and further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

African American Higher Education Trends

African American, along with Hispanic college students are more likely than their White and Asian counterparts to come from low socioeconomic status backgrounds and also more likely to be a first-generation college student (Fischer, 2007). A report released by the Dellums Commission (Harper, 2006) revealed that despite African American males comprising 7.9% of the population ages 18 to 24 in 2000, they accounted for only 5.2% of the undergraduate students that year and by 2004 that percentage dropped to 2.8%. Meanwhile, black female enrollment increased 126% from 1976 to 2002, while black male enrollment only increased 51%. When African American males do enroll at colleges and universities, they are graduating at lower rates than other students. In 2004, the average graduation rate for black males was 44.3% in comparison to 61.4% for white males and 53.2% for African American females. The under representation of African American males in higher education is partly attributed to their high school graduation rates. In 2000, 74.3% of black males ages 18 to 24 had obtained at least a high school diploma in comparison to 80.2% of black females and 86.4% of white males. These statistics were taken from 50 public flagship universities across the United States, one university from each state. In addition, African American males have a relatively lower academic performance in higher education when compared to other groups. It is worth noting that African-American male students achieve better grades at Historically Black

Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) than at predominantly White institutions. Some attribute this trend to lower expectations at the HBCUs while others attribute it to support and comfortable settings at HBCUs for the African American males, thus increasing their performance (Davis, 1994).

Black women are also outnumbering black men in other areas such as enrollment at specific institutions like HBCUs and attainment of graduate and professional degrees. In 1992, black women made up of nearly 60% of the student population at HBCUs. Also, from 1976 to 1990, black women increased enrollment in masters programs from 62.4% to 69.8% in comparison to male counterparts (Slater, 1994). In 1995, there were 45, 601 African American women graduate students in higher education in comparison to 23, 289 black men ("Why the large," 1998). In addition, black women are now obtaining more PhD degrees than black men (Slater, 1994).

Factors Contributing to the Gender Disparity

Hall and Rowan (2000) completed a study in which they analyzed the possible factors that contributed to academic failures of African American males in higher education institutions in the United States. The factors were drawn from previous research compiled about the higher education experience of African American males. The research suggests that African American males' experiences are less favorable than the experiences of female counterparts in the family, school, and community environments. Also, significant family members may have the potential to enhance academic achievement for the African American males, because parenting behaviors such as monitoring school progress is positively correlated to educational achievement and success, and perceptions of belonging and support seemed to be successful determinants

of achievement. After discussion, answers were taped and a computer software program analyzed the conversation to see the frequency of keywords, the results included personal factors as the main reason for the students attending school. Race was also seen as the most popular special issue facing African Americans in higher education. In addition, mentoring for the males and special programs were given as suggestions to successfully educate black males. Implications from the study suggest that racism prevails as a significant barrier to the enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of African American males and diversity is important to the success of these males.

A doctoral dissertation study completed by Coleman (2001) sought to investigate the factors perceived by high school seniors to affect the college attendance of African American male and female students. Coleman used a semi-structured interview to elicit responses from male and female interviewees at a small suburban high school in Texas. The interview included questions about perceived problems facing African Americans in continuing onto higher education and influences facing students while making educational decisions. Lack of motivation, inadequate academic preparation, and lack of work ethic/laziness were reported most often as serious problems. Thirteen of 20 students cited parents as the most important influence on their educational decisions; one student mentioned peer groups as an influence. Also, 50% of the students thought that there were significant differences in problems faced by black men and women. Of 50%, six thought that men faced more serious problems compared to women.

Barnes' (1992) study of five Norfolk, Virginia high schools explored personal traits, characteristics, reasons, and structural factors in the lives of African American dropouts at the high schools through interviews. Approximately 54.3% of the dropouts

were under 17 years old and younger and 71.4% of the dropouts occurred in the ninth grade. The majority of these students were also students who resided in single parent homes, often residing with the mother. Drugs, fighting, and dislike for school were among the multiple personal factors listed by the dropouts. Forty-one percent of the students felt that school was boring. Barnes noted racism, ineffective teachers, little assistance with homework, suspensions and expulsions, and family issues as structural factors impacting the dropout rates.

Davis and Jordan (1994) explored the experiences of African American males in middle and high school by investigating salient contextual and structural variables in the school and how they affect the educational outcomes of black males. Data were taken from the *National Education Longitudinal Study* using black male eighth and tenth graders. Results of the study indicated that in middle school achievement, urbanicity, emphasis on discipline, inability to motivate students, and absenteeism among teachers appeared as factors that had a negative influence on black male performance. In high school performance, the teacher's motivation and expectations seemed to play a major role in success in addition to the other factors. When the researchers manipulated the independent variables in the study, such as SES background and prior learning of the students, there was a significant effect.

Osborne (1997) explored race and academic disidentification among various ethnic/racial groups. The concept of disidentification is the lack of a relationship between academic self-esteem and global self-esteem. To complete the study, Osborne used self-reports from students on personal grades along with a computerized program for the actual data. Also, the *Rosenberg Self-View Inventory* was used to access self esteem. In a

weighted sample consisting of both genders of African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites, African American boys from grades 8 to 12 showed a significant decrease over time in the relationship between grades and self-esteem.

Negative perceptions of black males from educators show serious consequences in the quest for academic achievement. Garibaldi (1992) constructed a study on the New Orleans Public School District black males' success. Examined were the educational statistics of African American males in the district as well as student, teacher, and parental perceptions. In this urban school system where 87% of the students are African American, black males accounted for 58% of the non-promotions, 80% of the expulsions, 65% of the suspensions, and 45% of the dropouts, despite only accounting for 45% of the school population. In the survey of more than 2,250 black males in the school district, 95% reported that they expect to graduate from high school. However, 40% of the males thought that their teachers had not set high enough expectations and goals for them and 60% said that teachers should push them harder. Nevertheless, when a random sample of 500 teachers were surveyed and asked if they believed black male students would go to college, almost 6 out of every 10 teachers responded negatively. Davis and Jordan's study (1994) showed similar findings in which teacher's lack of motivation and absenteeism from school had a negative impact on black males in middle and high schools.

Washington and Newman (1991) listed societal as well as individual and cultural factors that influence the gender disparity in higher education. Societal influences included a lack of role models, certain aspects of the school processes such as teacher influences and criticism, peer influences, and opportunity differentials that stems from

racism were all societal influences. There were also individual and cultural factors such as family and child rearing practices. For example, in many African American families, male children receive different treatment. Washington and Newman (1991) noted that these factors alone could not account for the gender disparity, because little is known about some areas such as child rearing practices.

The impact of racism towards African American men in higher education can be seen in the passing of certain laws. For example, in 1996 California passed Proposition 209 that outlawed considering race and gender in hiring, contracting, and admission processes in higher education. At the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), results of this law is seen as a factor in the current low enrollment rate of African Americans despite the increasing number of qualified African American applicants. In 2006, only 100 African Americans enrolled which is two percent of the 4,805 total number and 25 fewer African Americans enrolled than in the previous year (Ocampo, 2006).

More black men are in jail than in higher education, by a factor of 3 to 1. In comparison, in 1999, 15 times the number of black women was in higher education than the number incarcerated and 7 times the number of white men was in higher education than the number incarcerated. These statistics suggest unfair practices, because in the 1900s about 60% of all new inmates were imprisoned on drug-related offenses. Some studies showed that less than 15% of the drug users were black, however, blacks are about 33% of all those arrested on criminal drug charges and they make up 75% of offenders who receive jail sentences on drug charges. This in conjunction with the three-

strike law that was implemented in the 1990s has landed many African American males in prison ("More Black," 2003).

Also, a declining involvement of African American parents in their sons' educations has been positively associated with negative academic performance. For example, in Garibaldi's study (1992), when parents were surveyed, about 80% of the 3,523 parents indicated that they believed their sons expected to go to college, but 25% parents surveyed had never gone to the child's school for parental conference's to discuss the child's report card.

Despite the lower enrollment rates and drastic conditions in higher education, African Americans are interested in pursuing further education. One study showed that after controlling all factors and differences concerning enrollment, African Americans are about 11% more likely than Whites to enroll in a four-year college or university in the fall following graduation from high school. Despite this finding, African Americans have less access to the information and knowledge about how to achieve their goals, specifically acquiring a college education (Perna, 2000).

Other factors affecting African American males are suicide, substance abuse, decline in economic status, unemployment and underemployment, crime and violence, and poor family relations (Blake & Darling, 1994). There is limited sociological research and studies on African American families in comparison to research on Whites. Also, some research on African American families tends to be distorted. Various models have been developed to explain African American family life. These models include the Social Systems Theory approach that consists of the idea that African American families are social systems that contain aggregations of people and their accompanying social roles,

bound together by mutual interaction and interdependence that rely heavily on relationships, and the Ecological Perspective that interprets the African American family in relation to environmental constraints. Other models include the developmental approach that views family structure over a life cycle (Allen, 1995). Billingsley's Social Systems theory of Black family life (1992) portrays the African American family as systems embedded in each other. Individuals exist in the contexts provided by their families, families exist in the contexts provided by communities, and the communities are within the context of the larger society. The notions of interdependence and interpenetration are central to this model, because of each system belonging and relying on another.

Student Involvement Theory and Research

Astin's theory of involvement (1984) refers to the behavioral aspects of the college experience and the amount of physical and psychological energy the student applies to his or her academic experience. This involvement theory has five postulates that include involvement as the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects, occurring on a continuum, having quantitative and qualitative features, the amount of student learning and development balance in proportion to the quantity and quality of student involvement, and the effectiveness of educational practice when it is associated with the practice to increase student involvement. A student with a high degree of involvement can be described as one who spends a considerable amount of time studying, spends time on campus, participates in organizations, and frequently interacts with other students and faculty. A student with a low level of involvement does the opposite.

Astin (1997) described the effects of involvement in various dimensions of the college experience of 25,000 undergraduates attending 217 four-year colleges and universities. Among the different aspects that have an impact on a student's level of involvement is place of residence during college. Leaving home to attend college has direct impact on satisfaction with student life and the overall college experience. Self reported growth is reported in many areas including cultural awareness, leadership, interpersonal, and job skills when students leave home to attend college. Living in a campus residence hall is directly relatable to positive effects on the attainment of the bachelor's degree, satisfaction with faculty, and willingness to enroll in the same institution.

Astin (1975) initially reported that a student's financial aid status impacts the student's development. For example, student retention was believed to increase with the assistance of scholarships and work-study programs and negatively affected by student loans. These findings are no longer supported by Astin's research (1997) presented in *What Matters in College: Four Critical Years Revisited*. State assistance and most forms of federal aid, college work-study, and loans have no noticeable effect on student development. The only form of financial aid that appears to have considerable direct effects on student development is grants given to a student from the college. Institutionally based scholarships have direct positive effects on graduating with honors and college GPA. In contrast, having need-based aid has negative effects on graduating with honors and college GPA.

Astin's research (1997) implied that majoring in specific fields of study could also impact a student's level of involvement. Choosing a biological science as a major

increases the likelihood that he or she will pursue a career in scientific research four years later as well as making a theoretical contribution to science. In addition, a negative effect on self-reported growth in job related skills is reported in this major. Entering into college as a business major increases the chances that a student will pursue a business related career upon graduation, but significant negative effects on altruism, social activism, commitment to promoting racial understanding, self-reported growth in cultural awareness, and perception of the institution's diversity orientation. Education majors have many positive outcomes with student life. This includes the perception of the quality of instruction, experience with the facilities, overall college experience, and willingness to re-enroll in the same college if faced with the same decision. In contrast, engineering majors reported negative satisfaction with various aspects including satisfaction with faculty, quality of instruction, student life, opportunities to take interdisciplinary courses, and the overall college experience. These effects proved to be the most significant on student outcomes than any other field of study. Majoring in health professions has positive effects on self-reported growth in job-related skills and knowledge of the field, but negative effects on retention, entry to graduate school, promoting racial understanding, and satisfaction with the opportunity to take interdisciplinary courses. In contrast, majoring in social sciences showed many positive outcomes with the overall college experience.

Astin (1997) also investigated academic involvement in college students. The hours per week a student spends doing homework or studying produces the largest and most numerous partial correlations with student outcomes when the effects of environmental variables, entering student characteristics, and years of undergraduate

education completed have been controlled. It is positively related to many academic outcomes that include retention, graduating with honors, attending graduate school, and self-reported increases in cognitive and affective skills. Engaging in honors courses, interdisciplinary courses, study-abroad programs, college internship programs, racial or cultural awareness workshops, independent research projects, class presentations, and taking essay exams seem to produce a high degree of student involvement.

Student interaction with faculty has many positive correlations with student development. After controlling variables, overall student-faculty interaction has positive correlations with satisfaction with the faculty, perception of student-oriented faculty, quality of instruction, individual support services, self-reported intellectual and personal growth, tutoring other students, and the overall college experience. A notable outcome on the impact of career choice is that enhanced interaction with faculty has a positive effect on choosing a career in college teaching as a career choice (Astin, 1997). This finding is prevalent in all ethnic/racial groups (Fischer, 2007).

To measure involvement effects and interaction with student peers, specific composite items were used that included working on group projects with other students, participating in intramural sports, being a member of a social fraternity or sorority, discussing racial or ethnic issues, being elected to student office, and hours per week spent socializing in student clubs or organizations. Overall, student-to-student interaction has a positive correlation on leadership ability and student life. Membership in a social fraternity or sorority produced slightly different patterns. For example, other than student life, being a member of a social fraternity or sorority did not have any impact on student satisfaction outcomes, but did have positive effects on self-reported growth in leadership

abilities and alcohol consumption. Alcohol consumption is negatively related to college GPA and graduating with honors, but it is positively related to the attainment of a bachelor's degree (Astin, 1997). For minority students, greater involvement in formal social activities in college, like clubs and organizations, was positively related to college grades in Fischer's study (2007) investigating involvement and ethnicity.

Astin (1997) also investigated involvement effects in other aspects of a college student's life. Working a full-time job, an off-campus part-time job, or commuting have a negative effect on various areas of student involvement. In comparison, working an on-campus part time job has a positive effect in areas like obtaining a bachelor's degree and self-reported cognitive and affective growth. Fisher (2007) found that students who experience financial strains during college, specifically minorities, and have to work through college are less likely to have the ability to fully participate in college life.

Astin (1997) concluded that the student's peer group is the most powerful source of influence on growth and development during the college years. Peer group SES was found to have the most direct effect on all the results. It has positive effects on many aspects of student satisfaction including student life, quality of instruction, and faculty. Satisfaction with college is most closely related to social ties that students form with others once on campus (Fischer, 2007). Peer group results also showed self-reported growth cognitively and had positive effects on the GRE Verbal, MCAT, and LSAT tests. There were also positive psychological effects in social altruism, commitment to promoting racial understanding and a direct negative effect on the view that racial discrimination is no longer an issue in the United States (Astin, 1997).

In a follow-up article to *What Matters in College*, Astin (1993) discussed diversity and multicultural issues and its impact on student development and involvement. The study tested three areas of environmental measures related to diversity and multiculturalism: institutional diversity emphasis, faculty diversity emphasis, and student diversity experiences. Institutional diversity emphasis displays the extent to which the faculty believe their institution is committed to promoting multiculturalism and increasing diversity in the college's population. The strongest positive effects of institutions that promoted this aspect were that there was increased cultural awareness and a commitment to promoting racial understanding. Overall student satisfaction with the college experience was also related to this measure. Faculty diversity emphasis, described as the faculty's own practices and perceptions of the overall institutional practices, showed similar effects to institutional diversity emphasis and its strongest positive effects were shown in cultural awareness and overall college experience. Direct student experience with diversity, including socialization with different racial/ethnic groups, showed positive effects with many areas including cultural awareness and promoting racial understanding. Taking women/ethnic study courses or participation in racial/cultural awareness workshops were negatively associated with the belief that racial discrimination is no longer a problem in the United States. The frequency with which students discussed racial/ethnic issues during their undergraduate years produced the largest number of positive effects. In a study by Furr and Elling (2002), results indicated that in African American students, involvement in multicultural experiences had a positive relationship with retention and experiences where the student did not feel valued had a negative relationship.

Student Engagement Theory and Research

The best known set of engagement indicators is the “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). These principles include student-faculty contact, reciprocity and cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, emphasis on time spent on a task, high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning. All these factors are positively related to student satisfaction, learning and development, and persistence in college. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005) explored many of the facets of a student’s success through engagement while enrolled in college. Student engagement has two significant components that contribute to the success of a student. The amount of time and effort students put into their coursework and other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that comprise student success is the first component. The second component is the ways the institutions allocates resources, compiles learning opportunities, and provides services to encourage students to participate in and benefit from such activities.

To best describe the best practices for student engagement, Kuh et al. (2005) document the practices of 20 Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) colleges in the United States and the way they create a success oriented campus culture and learning environment. Faculty and administrators play a key role in fostering student engagement and success in students. Meaningful interactions between students and their teachers are essential to high-quality learning experiences. The faculty must be assessable and responsive to the students’ needs in and out of the classroom. In addition, talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, discussing ideas from readings, receiving prompt feedback on performance, working with a faculty member on a research

project or activities other than coursework, and discussing grades or assignments with the instructor are all associated with high levels of student engagement (Kuh et al., 2005). Students report higher levels of engagement and learning where faculty members use active and collaborative techniques, emphasize higher-order cognitive activities in the classroom, and challenge students academically (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005).

Active and collaborative learning is also associated with student success and engagement. Students who engage in asking questions in class or contributing to class discussions, making class presentations, working with other students on projects outside the classroom, tutoring other students, and discussing readings with other students are engaging in active and collaborative learning styles. Increases in these measures contribute to students' success and development (Kuh et al., 2005). In a study by Kuh, Pace, and Vesper (1997), it was determined that active learning and cooperation among students were the best predictors of gains in student success.

Enriching educational experiences that include students experiencing diversity teaches students valuable things about themselves and other cultures. Included in this aspect are internships, community service, senior capstone courses, and opportunities where students are able to apply knowledge. Other activities that enrich educational experiences are having serious conversations with students of different beliefs of cultures, using electronic technology to complete class assignments, and having an institutional climate that encourages contact among students from different economic, social, and racial/ethnic backgrounds (Kuh et al., 2005).

Supportive campus environments also aid in increasing student engagement. Perceptions of the institutional environment influences academic success at

undergraduate institutions (Kuh et al., 1997). Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that promote positive relationships and social relations among different groups on campus. Included in this is an institutional emphasis on providing students support for academic and social success, help for students working with nonacademic responsibilities, and high quality student relations with other students, faculty, and administrative personnel. Colleges with programs that welcome and affirm freshmen/transfer students, have residential living environments that provide academic and social support, responsive and effective advising networks, and mentoring and other initiatives that help students could be considered to have supportive campus environments (Kuh et al., 2005).

Student engagement practices at some colleges and universities often do not cater to minority groups, including African American students. In a doctoral dissertation by Bourke (2007), the researcher sought to investigate various aspects of African American students' engagement experience at a predominantly white institution. Bourke (2007) found that students of color did not interact with various aspects of institution structures at the university. These students' experiences include race as an issue in the classroom. They were also confronted with biases and stereotypes held by White faculty and students. In addition, students of color found it harder than their white counterparts to participate in social atmosphere that govern the norms, values, and traditions of the institution. These issues often lead to self segregation.

Student Departure/Retention Theory and Research

Tinto (1988) used ideas from the anthropological book, *Rites of Passage*, to apply and develop stages for student departure in a student's college career. The first stage, separation, requires students to disassociate themselves in various degrees from membership of the past communities. This is typically associated with the student's high school and place of residence. Disassociation from these previous communities must occur physically as well as socially in order for the student to be fully integrated into the college community. This may not apply to the commuter student who stays at home during college; this student's movement may be less stressful but probably will be less rewarding. The second stage of the college career, transition, is the period between associations of the past and hoped associations with the present community. New students have not yet acquired the norms and appropriate behavior for the new setting. With assistance, some students transition easily while others do not and tend to withdraw. The final stage, incorporation into college, the student must now choose the appropriate norms and patterns to establish membership into whichever of the many social and intellectual communities in college life. Tinto (1988) makes it clear that this theory has limitations and an expanded theory of student departure is necessary.

A study by Elkins, Baxton, and James (2000) sought to explore first to second-semester persistence of first-time, full-time freshman at a public four-year institution focusing on Tinto's first stage concept of separation (1988). Results of the study (Elkins et al., 2000) revealed that women and Caucasian students were more likely to receive support for college attendance than male students or students who were members of a racial/ethnic minority group. Caucasian and women students were also less likely to

perceive the need to reject past attitudes and values than male students and students belonging to racial /ethnic minority groups. Students who received considerable support to attend college or perceive a need to perceive the need to reject attitudes and values of their past communities were less likely to depart from college early. Overall, the factor of support had the greatest influence on the persistence/departure decision. Students who were members of racial/ethnic minority groups received less support for college attendance; this finding was similar to Tinto's (1993) claim that students from racial/ethnic minority groups may find separation more difficult.

Tinto (1987) also proposed that the overall differences in persistence rates between African Americans and non-minorities were generally due to differences in academic preparedness rather than socioeconomic backgrounds. Tinto (1993) viewed prejudice and discrimination as factors influencing the students' integration into his or her social and academic environment. A study by Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, and Hagedorn (1999) investigated the campus racial climate and adjustment of African-Americans in comparison to Whites and found results that refute some of Tinto's claims (1987). The notion of academic unpreparedness as an explanation of why African Americans are less prone to persist than Whites was not supported by the findings of the study. Prior ability gained before college had at most an indirect effect on their decisions to persist to the following semester/school year. Also, the perception of discrimination played a role in the students' commitment to the institution (Cabrera et al., 1999). Minority students in particular may face racial hostility on campus that hinders adjustment into college. African Americans are more likely to have a perception of negative racial campus climate at colleges than other racial/ethnic groups. People who

have negative perceptions of the racial climate, despite the person's personal ethnicity, are more likely to have lower levels of satisfaction with the college (Fischer, 2007). In addition, disengagement with friends, family, and past communities was not seen as a precondition for successful adjustment to college; the reverse appeared to be a more reliable premise. For both African American and White students, parental encouragement and various forms of support facilitated the transition into the academic and social realms of the institution (Cabrera et al., 1999). Nora and Cabrera (1996) also found that transition into college tends to be smoother for students that have supportive family and friends from the previous communities.

Summary of the Literature Review

African American male school performance is declining drastically in all forms of education, while the African American female performance is increasing, thus causing a significant gender gap in success between genders. Previous research attributes this problem to many factors that include racism and situational factors that males face during and before college attendance. Previous studies also mostly examine African American males before entering higher education. Many studies cite mentorship programs in high school and college as an effective way to improve higher education attendance and retention in African-American males (Coleman, 2001; Hall & Rowan, 2000), although it is difficult to directly measure the mentorship effects (Thile & Matt, 1995). To further explore the gender disparity, it is important to explore African American student success and its relationship to the level of engagement African American higher education. Even though Astin and other researchers have performed a great deal of research on the impact of different levels of student involvement and engagement in college, research is still

limited pertaining to African Americans in this area. It is important to take a closer look at student engagement, because engagement not only includes activity in the campus community, but also includes methods of teaching and how that impacts the African American students. Bourke's study (2007) notes many factors that might limit an African American student's ability to become fully engaged in his or her campus community. African American female success in higher education makes examining and comparing student engagement levels of African American males to the African American females worthwhile in order to gain a deeper understanding of how student engagement between the genders contribute to the gender disparity in higher education.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Context of the Study

The study was conducted at Rowan University, in Glassboro, NJ. Glassboro is located in rural Gloucester County in southern New Jersey, and is approximately 30 minutes outside of Philadelphia. Rowan is a medium sized university with a very high undergraduate enrollment profile. As of the fall 2007 semester, there are 10, 091 total students at Rowan and 8,746 designated as undergraduate students. Of the undergraduate population, 36% reside in on-campus residence halls. The gender ratio of the undergraduate population is 54% women to 46% men. There are 736 undergraduate African Americans comprising 8% of the student population as of Fall 2007 (Institutional Research and Planning at Rowan University).

Population and Sample Selection

The target population for this study was all African American male and female undergraduate students enrolled in colleges in the United States. The available population was African American male and female undergraduate students at Rowan University as of fall 2007. The convenience sample consisted of 163 subjects. There were 86 African American males and 74 African American females included in the study, three subjects did not list their gender. Of that sample, seven students volunteered to participate in the qualitative portion of the study.

Instrumentation

The study used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from the subjects and participants. The instrument used for the quantitative portion of the study was a modified instrument that consisted of questions from *Ohio University's Institutional Research Department Student Involvement Survey* and the *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE). The modified survey (Appendix A) consists of six sections that investigated the research questions. Included in the sections are background information, involvement questions, the nature of relationships with other students and faculty, and the importance and satisfaction of student involvement in the subjects' experience at Rowan thus far. The first section of the instrument, investigating the engagement levels of the student, used a Likert scale format ranging from very often to never. The second half of the instrument investigated the importance and satisfaction levels of involvement statements pertaining to the student's college experiences. The qualitative portion of the study used a Focus Group Protocol Guide (Appendix B) developed by Bourke (2007) that contained eight open-ended interview questions to elicit responses from the interviewees. The purpose of the guide was to get an in depth understanding of the impact of student involvement in chosen subjects.

Following the approval of the Institutional Review Board of Rowan University (Appendix C), a pilot test of the survey instruments was conducted. The survey and interview were administered to a senior class member at Rowan University in order to test the readability and validity of the instruments. The student did not have any problems in understanding the questions and also answered the questions efficiently. The student was asked what suggestions she would make to the instrument and no suggestions were

given. In addition, other researchers examined the instrument and it was agreed the instrument was ready to be administered.

Data Collection

Subjects were contacted and asked to participate in the study by completing the survey. Subjects met the researcher in a small classroom in the Chamberlain Student Center at Rowan University where the survey was completed. After the subjects completed the survey, the students were given the opportunity to volunteer to participate in the focus group portion of the study; seven subjects volunteered. Before the focus group began, the participants signed a consent form (Appendix D) that explained the purpose of this portion of the study and provided permission to participate in the focus group. The researcher read the introduction to the second part of the study featured at the top of the Focus Group Protocol Guide (Appendix B). Focus group participants were informed that their identity would be kept confidential when reporting the data and the researcher proceeded to facilitate discussion among the group. The session was audio taped and later data were analyzed using a content analysis procedure. At the end of the session, the researcher thanked the participants for volunteering in the study and gave contact information in case there were any questions raised about the study in the future.

Data Analysis

The independent variables in this study included the subjects' gender, age, full-time or part-time status, class status, cumulative GPA, and parents' highest level of completed education. The dependent variables were the responses to survey items listed to test levels of student involvement and engagement. Variations in the responses were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) computer software.

Data from the surveys were analyzed using the SPSS program to test for levels of significance in the responses. Correlations and descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to examine data that referred to the research questions. The second portion of the study was a focus group. Data from the focus group were analyzed using the content analysis procedure. Among rules for this procedure, a phrase or clause is the basic unit of analysis and are categorized to determine similarities and differences in reporting (Sisco, 1981). Appendix E has the complete listing of rules and procedures for logical analysis of written data.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Study findings are a result of surveys and a participant focus group conducted in the spring 2008 semester at Rowan University. Survey responses were coded and analyzed using SPSS software, while the focus group was transcribed and interpreted using content analysis.

Profile of the Sample

The participants in the study were African American male and female undergraduate students at Rowan University. One hundred sixty-three participants were surveyed and seven volunteered to participate in the focus group. There are 736 undergraduate African American students as of the Fall 2007 semester, with 163 subjects completing the survey portion of the study yielding a response rate of 22%. The survey and focus group participants were considered a convenience sample, because the survey was distributed to those willing to participate in the study and the focus group was voluntary. Those who participated in the study identified themselves as African American or Black. Participants volunteered to participate in the survey while they were at different venues on Rowan's campus like the student center or offices around campus.

Of the 163 surveyed, 53% of the subjects were male and 45% female; two percent of the sample declined to state gender. Table 4.1 represents the male and female percentages, age, fulltime or part-time status, class, and cumulative GPA.

Nineteen percent of the subjects were under the age of 18. Forty percent were between 19 and 20 years. Thirty-three percent were 21 to 22 years old, and 7% were 23 years and older. Three subjects did not respond to this question. Ninety-five percent of the students were full-time students and four percent were part time. One subject did not respond to this question. Thirty-one percent of the sample was freshmen, 24% sophomores, 25% juniors, and 20% were seniors. Subjects were asked to self identify their class status. The subjects' cumulative GPA ranges were self-reported. Nine percent of the sample reported their GPA to be between a 4.0 and a 3.7, 11% between 3.6 and 3.4, 23% between 3.3 and 3.0, 25% between 2.9 and 2.7, 16% between 2.6 and 2.4, 12% between 2.3 and 2.0, 3% between 1.9 and 1.7, 1% between 1.6 and 1.4, and 1% were below a 1.3 GPA.

Table 4.1

Sample Demographics

Variable		N=163 Frequency	%
Gender			
	Male	86	53
	Female	74	45
	No response given	3	2
	Total	160	100
Age			
	18 & Under	31	19
	19 to 20	66	41
	21 to 22	54	33
	23 & Older	12	7
	Total	163	100
Status			
	Full-time	155	95
	Part-time	7	4
	No response given	1	1

	Total	163	100
Class Status			
	Freshman	50	31
	Sophomore	39	24
	Junior	41	25
	Senior	33	20
	Total	163	100
Cumulative GPA			
	4.0 to 3.7	14	9
	3.6 to 3.4	18	11
	3.3 to 3.0	38	23
	2.9 to 2.7	40	25
	2.6 to 2.4	26	16
	2.3 to 2.0	18	12
	1.9 to 1.7	4	3
	1.6 to 1.4	1	1
	1.3 & Below	1	1
	No response given	2	1
	Total	163	100

Table 4.2 shows the subjects' majors or expected majors, and mother and father's highest level of completed education. The majors were divided by colleges where the major resides: liberal arts, liberal science, education, engineering, fine and performing arts, business, communication, and undeclared. The majority of students' majors were classified in the liberal arts category with 37%, liberal sciences were 11%, education 4%, engineering 4%, fine and performing arts 4%, business 14%, communication 17%, and 7% were undeclared. Two participants did not report their major.

For the fathers' education, the highest percentage graduated from high school with 30%. Fourteen percent of fathers did not finish high school, 19% had some college,

4% completed an associates degree, 12% completed a bachelors degree, 10% completed a masters degree, and 4% held a doctoral degree. Ten subjects listed no response.

For mothers' percentages, the highest percentage graduated from high school with 29%.

Six percent of mothers did not finish high school, 25% had some college, 13% completed an associates degree, 12% completed a bachelors degree, 12% completed a masters degree, and 3% held a doctoral degree. Two subjects listed no response.

Table 4.2

Sample Demographics

Variable		N=163 Frequency	%
Major/Major Expected			
	Liberal Arts	60	37
	Liberal Science	18	11
	Education	7	4
	Engineering	7	4
	Fine & Performing Arts	7	4
	Business	22	14
	Communication	28	17
	Undeclared	12	7
	No response given	2	1
	Total	163	100
Father's Education			
	Did not finish high school	23	14
	Graduated from high school	49	30
	Some college	32	20
	Associate's degree	7	4
	Bachelor's degree	19	12
	Master's degree	17	10

	Doctoral degree	6	4
	No response given	10	6
	Total	163	100
Mother's Education			
	Did not finish high school	10	6
	Graduated from high school	47	29
	Some college	40	25
	Associate's degree	21	13
	Bachelor's degree	20	12
	Master's degree	19	12
	Doctoral degree	4	3
	No response given	2	1
	Total	163	100

Analysis of the Data

Research Question 1: What do selected undergraduate students report on their involvement and engagement patterns at Rowan University?

The student engagement portion of the survey was designed to explore the levels of student engagement in African American students. These questions investigated the different areas that students are engaged in academically and also explored their involvement in particular campus activities. Table 4.3 shows the results of this portion of the survey. The highest rated engagement item on the survey was the frequency of using email to communicate with a professor. Fifty-seven percent reported doing this very often, 24% often, 16% of subjects said sometimes, and 3% never, with a mean value of 1.64 ($SD=.840$). Other highly rated items included asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions, discussed grades or assignments with professors, worked with other

students on projects during class, and exercised or participated in physical activities.

Table 4.4 represents the highest rated statements of student engagement.

Table 4.5 represents the list of lowest rated statements. The lowest rated statement was participated in university publication. Four percent reported doing this very often, 3% often, 20% of subjects said sometimes, and 74% never, with a mean value of 1.64 ($SD=.840$). Other lowly rated statements included participated in student government, participated in religious organizations, and held an internship.

Table 4.3

Survey of Student Engagement

Very Often = 1, Often = 2, Sometimes = 3, Never = 4

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Participated in intramural athletics	3.22	1.122
2. Participated in student government	3.64	.767
3. Participated in university publication	3.65	.716
4. Participated in college productions or performances	3.18	1.091
5. Participated in professional or departmental clubs	2.69	1.187
6. Participated in social clubs	2.45	1.090
7. Participated in residence hall activities	2.72	1.097
8. Participated in religious organizations	3.29	.967
9. Participated in volunteer service	2.73	1.050
10. Participated in leadership programs	2.72	1.166
11. Held an off-campus part-time job	2.60	1.246
12. Held an on-campus part-time job	2.91	1.239
13. Held an internship	3.23	1.138
14. Participated in field experience	2.98	1.186
15. Participated in independent study	3.12	1.102
16. Worked with classmates outside of class	2.12	.983
17. Tutored or taught other students	2.83	1.101
18. Participated in community-based projects as part of class	3.04	1.071
19. Attended an art exhibit, gallery, play, or dance	2.46	1.020
20. Exercised or participated in physical activities	1.96	.958
21. Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	1.93	.959
22. Discussed ideas with faculty members	2.67	1.109
23. Participated in religious or spiritual activities	2.85	1.161
24. Asked questions or made contributions to class discussions	1.82	.891
25. Made a class presentation	2.01	.972
26. Included diverse perspectives in class discussions/assignments	2.12	.990
27. Worked with other students on projects during class	1.94	.960
28. Worked with other students on projects outside of class to prepare assignments	2.09	.928
29. Used email to communicate with an instructor	1.64	.840
30. Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	1.97	.990

Table 4.4

Highest Rated Statements of Student Engagement

	Very Often		Often		Sometimes		Never	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Used email to communicate with instructor <i>n</i> =162, <i>SD</i> =.840 <i>M</i> =1.64	93	57	39	24	26	16	4	3
Asked questions or made contribution to class discussion <i>N</i> =163, <i>SD</i> =.891 <i>M</i> =1.82	72	44	59	36	22	14	10	6
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor <i>N</i> =163, <i>SD</i> =.959 <i>M</i> =1.93	68	42	52	32	30	18	13	8
Worked with other students on projects during class <i>N</i> =163, <i>SD</i> =.960 <i>M</i> =1.94	71	44	40	25	43	26	9	6
Exercised or participated in physical activities <i>N</i> =163, <i>SD</i> =.958 <i>M</i> =1.96	66	41	50	31	35	22	12	7
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor <i>N</i> =163, <i>SD</i> =.990 <i>M</i> =1.97	69	42	43	26	38	23	12	8
Made a class presentation <i>N</i> =163, <i>SD</i> =.972 <i>M</i> =2.01	64	39	46	28	41	25	12	7
Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments <i>N</i> =163, <i>SD</i> =.928 <i>M</i> =2.09	54	33	49	30	51	31	9	6

Included diverse perspectives in class discussions/ assignments $N=163$, $SD=.990$ $M=2.12$	56	34	47	29	41	25	12	7
Worked with classmates outside of class $n=162$, $SD=.983$ $M=2.12$	54	33	49	30	44	27	15	9

Table 4.5

Lowest Rated Statements of Student Engagement

	Very Often		Often		Sometimes		Never	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Participated in university publication $N=163$, $SD=.719$ $M=3.95$	6	4	4	3	32	20	120	74
Participated in student government $N=163$, $SD=.767$ $M=3.64$	7	4	7	4	24	15	124	76
Participated in religious organizations $N=163$, $SD=.967$ $M=3.29$	14	9	14	10	40	25	92	56
Held an internship $n=162$, $SD=1.138$ $M=3.23$	26	16	12	7	23	14	101	62
Participated in intramural athletics $N=163$, $SD=1.122$ $M=3.22$	25	15	13	8	26	16	99	61
Participate in a college production or performance $n=162$, $SD=1.091$ $M=3.18$	24	15	12	7	37	23	89	55
Participated in independent study $n=162$, $SD=.928$ $M=3.12$	23	14	20	12	33	20	86	53

Participated in community
based projects as
part of class

$N=163$, $SD=.1.071$

$M=2.12$

54

33

49

30

44

27

15

9

The second portion of the survey explored the students' levels of involvement on the campus by asking the subjects about the importance of different aspects and satisfaction with that item. Students felt that the most important survey items were adequate academic atmosphere, academic advising, and faculty availability outside of the classroom. Students were most satisfied with the adequate academic atmosphere, interacting with different races and cultures, and establishing personal relationships with peers. They were least satisfied with getting involved in religious activities, adequate social atmosphere, and getting involved in student organizations. Table 4.6 represents these results.

Table 4.6

Survey of Student Involvement

Very Important/Satisfied = 1, Important/Satisfied = 2, Neutral = 3

Somewhat NOT Important/Dissatisfied=4, NOT at all Important/Satisfied=5

Statement		Importance		Satisfaction	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	Establishing personal relationships with peers at Rowan University	1.99	1.108	2.29	1.202
2.	Getting involved in student organizations	2.15	1.167	2.43	1.240
3.	Getting involved in campus activities	2.18	1.090	2.39	1.122
4.	Attending cultural events on campus	2.27	1.184	2.51	1.149
5.	Interacting with students of different races or cultures	1.88	1.108	2.29	1.219
6.	Getting involved in religious activities	2.58	1.308	2.77	1.239
7.	Having a job while enrolled	2.37	1.401	2.55	1.462
8.	Faculty availability outside of class	1.76	1.201	2.34	1.039

9.	Social contact with faculty	2.15	1.195	2.37	.996
10.	Academic advising	1.68	1.076	2.32	1.124
11.	Adequate personal security	1.80	1.154	2.41	1.007
12.	Adequate physical environment on campus	1.90	.995	2.36	1.004
13.	Adequate social atmosphere	1.91	1.044	2.47	1.135
14.	Adequate academic atmosphere	1.67	.982	2.21	1.023
15.	Fitting into the campus community	1.96	1.110	2.37	1.100

Research Question 2: Are there any significant relationships among the subjects' cumulative GPA and involvement/engagement patterns?

There were relationships between cumulative GPA and select involvement and engagement statements. There were moderate positive relationships between cumulative GPA and holding an internship ($r = .284, p = .000$) at a $p < .01$ level, taught/tutored other students ($r = .271, p = .001$) at a $p < .01$ level, and made a class presentation ($r = .291, p = .000$) at a $p < .01$ level. The remainder of the positive relationships were significant but weak. The only significant negative correlation was a moderate positive correlation between cumulative GPA and being an EOF student ($r = -.250, p = .001$) at a $p < .01$ level. Table 4.7 represents these results.

Table 4.7

Significant Correlations Between Cumulative GPA and Items on Survey

Items	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> -level
Participated in student government <i>n</i> =161	.217**	.006
Participated in professional or department clubs <i>n</i> =160	.243**	.002
Participated in social clubs <i>n</i> =161	.224**	.004
Participated in religious organizations <i>n</i> =161	.164*	.038
Participated in volunteer service <i>n</i> =158	.197*	.038
Held an off-campus part-time job <i>n</i> =159	.187*	.018
Held an internship <i>n</i> =160	.284**	.000

Taught or tutored other students <i>n</i> =161	.271**	.001
Attended an art exhibit, gallery, play, or dance <i>n</i> =161	.195*	.013
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor <i>n</i> =161	.233**	.003
Discussed ideas with faculty members <i>n</i> =160	.225**	.004
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions or assignments <i>n</i> =161	.218**	.006
Made a class presentation <i>n</i> =161	.291**	.000
Included diverse perspectives in class discussions or assignments <i>n</i> =161	.207**	.008
Are you an EOF student? <i>n</i> =161	-.250**	.001
Getting involved in student organizations (satisfaction) <i>n</i> =160	.205**	.009
Getting involved in religious activities (satisfaction) <i>n</i> =160	.190*	.016
Having a job while enrolled (satisfaction) <i>n</i> =161	.183*	.020
Faculty availability outside of class (importance)	.175*	.027

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Research Question 3: Are there any significant relationships in the African American male and female students' responses to the survey questions?

There were three moderate correlations: participated in intramural athletics ($r = .365, p < .000$) at a $p < .01$ level, importance of having a job while enrolled ($r = -.329, p < .000$) at a $p < .01$ level, and importance of academic advising ($r = -.248, p < .002$) at a $p < .01$ level. There were also many significant weak negative relationships in survey responses by gender. Table 4.8 represents these results.

Table 4.8

Significant Correlations Between Cumulative GPA and Responses by Gender

Items	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> -level
Participated in intramural athletics <i>n</i> =160	.365**	.000
Participated in professional or department clubs <i>n</i> =159	-.156*	.050
Participated in social clubs <i>n</i> =160	-.235**	.003
Participated in residence hall activities <i>n</i> =160	-.161*	.041
Held an on-campus part-time job <i>n</i> =160	-.197*	.012
Attended an art exhibit, gallery, play or dance <i>n</i> =160	-.217**	.006
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor <i>n</i> =160	-.205**	.009
Participated in religious or spiritual activities <i>n</i> =160	-.209**	.008
Included diverse perspectives in class discussions/assignments <i>n</i> =160	-.197*	.013
Used email to communicate with an instructor <i>n</i> =159	-.172*	.030
Talked about career plans with faculty member/advisor <i>n</i> =160	-.201*	.011
Getting involved in campus activities (importance) <i>n</i> =160	-.176*	.026
Attending cultural events on campus (importance) <i>n</i> =159	-.194*	.014
Attending cultural events on campus (satisfaction) <i>n</i> =159	-.174*	.029
Interacting with students of different races or cultures (importance) <i>n</i> =160	-.160*	.044
Having a job while enrolled (importance) <i>n</i> =160	-.329**	.000
Having a job while enrolled (satisfaction) <i>n</i> =160	-.187*	.018
Faculty availability outside of class (importance) <i>n</i> =160	-.191*	.016
Social contact with faculty (importance) <i>n</i> =160	-.158*	.046
Academic advising (importance) <i>n</i> =160	-.248**	.002
Adequate personal security (importance) <i>n</i> =160	-.202	.011
Adequate academic atmosphere (importance) <i>n</i> =160	-.222**	.005

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Research Question 4: What do the results of the Focus Group say about the involvement and engagement levels of African American undergraduate students at Rowan University?

Of the 163 subjects who participated in the survey portion of the study, seven students agreed to participate in the focus group. To maintain confidentiality, the participants will be given numbers 1-7.

Participant One is senior class female at the university. She is a Resident Assistant and is involved in many clubs on campus. She originates from a suburban town and has slightly over a 3.0 cumulative GPA. When at home, she resides with both parents. She is a liberal studies major with plans to eventually attend graduate school after graduation. She seems to be leaning toward taking a year off before enrolling in graduate school.

Participant Two is a freshman male chemical engineering major. He is not involved with many activities on campus. He mentioned playing basketball in the student recreation center as the only activity he is involved in. After his first semester of college, his GPA was around a C average. He originates from a suburban neighborhood.

Participant Three is a male senior communication major. He originates from an urban city not too far from the university. He is a Resident Assistant and involved in numerous minority organizations on campus including the Black Cultural League and the NAACP. Participant three recently won a pageant that displays creative ability, talent, and persona in minority students on campus.

Participant Four is a male sophomore marketing major. He originates from a suburban town about 10 minutes from the university. In high school, he was very active in many sports including football. The current parents he resides with are his adoptive

parents. He is not aware of the identity of his biological parents. Participant four serves as a peer mentor in the male minority mentoring program on campus. His cumulative GPA is in the C-plus range.

Participant Five is a female senior sociology major. Her hometown is about 40 minutes from the campus. She is involved as a Resident Assistant and the president of her departmental club. She has a GPA of a little above a 3.9 and will be attending graduate school at the university in the following academic year after graduation. Participant five has career goals that include becoming a guidance counselor after graduate school.

Participant Six is a freshman male radio television and film (RTF) major. He originates from an inner city in the Midwest part of the United States. He enrolled at Rowan University on a full academic scholarship. His GPA is above a 3.0 and he must maintain this GPA while at Rowan because of the scholarship. Participant six is not involved in many activities, mostly playing basketball in the student recreation center. He has plans on becoming more involved at the start of his sophomore year.

Participant Seven is a transfer student from a private institution in the state. She decided to transfer to Rowan, because her previous institution did not have a music program. She classifies her class status junior, despite that she might have to stay an extra year of college as a result of transferring. She is involved in many activities on campus that revolve around her major, including belonging to a music fraternity.

The focus group consisted of questions contained in the Focus Group Protocol (Appendix B). The purpose of the questions was to gain a better perspective into the lives of African American students at Rowan University. The themes of focus group derived from a content analysis of the transcripts (Sisco, 1981), featured in Tables 4.9 – 4.16.

The first question asked about the general life at Rowan University. Immediately after the researcher asked the question multiple students replied that campus life tends to be boring, especially on the weekends. Two of the students in the group were freshman males and they mentioned that other than class and exercising, there is not too much to do. The main theme of the discussion around this question can be summed up in a statement by Participant Seven, who said, “I am involved in a lot of activities and there is a decent amount of activities to get involved with during the week, but it seems like a lot of the activities here at Rowan seem to be directed towards certain groups of people and not the entire student population.” Table 4.9 demonstrates the content analysis of the discussion on this question.

Table 4.9

What is Life Like at Rowan University?

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Limited activities to participate in	4	1
Neutral or inconsistent activities	2	2
A wide variety of activities	1	3

The next question focused on describing a typical Friday night at Rowan University. Everyone in the group mentioned that the weekends have limited activities. The two freshmen mentioned that they use the weekend to party. Three of the males mentioned that they often played video games on the weekend. Everyone was in consensus that a substantial portion of the student population goes home on the weekends. Table 4.10 represents the content analysis for question two.

Table 4.10

Tell me about a Typical Friday Night.

Theme	Frequency	Rank
A lot of people go home	5	1
Limited activities to participate in	2	2

Question three focused on who the students sought for advice at Rowan University. The older students either sought advice from a faculty member or advisor. The freshmen students sought advice from their Resident Assistants. The junior female mentioned that she prayed and used religion as her guidance. Table 4.18 represents the content analysis for this question.

Table 4.11

Who do you Talk to for Advice at Rowan University?

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Faculty/Advisor/Mentor	3	1
Student Leader	3	1
Religion	1	2

Question four investigated who the students socialized with. Four of the students mentioned that they socialized with a lot of people. Three of the students mentioned that they tend to stay close to their friends. When asked whether the group changes based on the campus setting, the majority of the students replied yes. These results are displayed in the content analysis in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Who do you Socialize with?

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Everyone	4	1
Close group of friends	3	2

Do those people change based on the campus setting?		
Yes	5	1
No	2	2

Question five sought to investigate how active the students are in organizations and activities on campus. The upperclassmen students were involved in many of the organizations on campus. The two freshmen students mentioned that have not got the opportunity yet get involved like they want to, but they have plans on doing so. This can best be described by Participant Six, a freshmen student, who said: “I haven’t really gotten the chance to get involved in any organizations. I plan on doing so next semester. For the moment, I pretty much go to class and play basketball in the gym.” Table 4.13 represents the content analysis of question five.

Table 4.13

<i>Are you Active in Any Organizations or Activities on Campus?</i>		
Theme	Frequency	Rank
Multiple organizations	5	1
Limited organizations	2	2

When asked whether Rowan University was welcoming to the subjects as a minority group member, they all remarked that at times they feel as if it is not. The researcher asked the group to further explain and the majority of the group felt as if the professors had lower expectations of African American students. Participant Three, a male senior said, “A lot of the professors automatically assume that I came through the EOF program. They also have low expectations for minority students, so I try to carry myself in a manner where they respect me.”

Participant Six, a freshman male remarked that, “The majority group does not realize that as a member of a minority group, we are automatically disadvantaged. They have no awareness about this and it causes them to say questionable things about race.”

Table 4.14 shows the content analysis for question six.

Table 4.14

Is Rowan University Welcoming to you as a Member of a Minority Group?

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Not welcoming at times	7	1

Four members of the group mentioned that they always feel at home at Rowan University while the other three mentioned that they felt at home most of the time. They mentioned that they are very comfortable where they live. Participant Five, a senior female student, reported that even though she feels comfortable in her environment, she was more comfortable prior to a murder that occurred on campus in the fall semester.

Table 4.15 displays the content analysis of feeling at home at Rowan University.

Table 4.15

Do you Feel at Home at Rowan University?

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Yes	4	1
Most of the time	3	2

Question eight asked the students do you ever feel like an outsider at Rowan. Five students mentioned that they sometimes get that feeling and two students mentioned no. When the five students who said yes were asked to explain these feelings, three mentioned that they feel like a lot of the activities on the campus are geared toward non-minority groups. The two others cited that they felt as if they do not attend an off campus

party, there is no other options. They cited religion as a reason for not attending parties. Participant Seven said that, “As I get older, my faith gets stronger; so the party scene is not for me. The problem is that if I don’t want to attend a party, I don’t have a lot of other options.” Table 4.16 represents question eight’s content analysis.

Table 4.16

Do you Ever Feel Like an Outsider Here?

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Yes, sometimes	5	1
No	2	2
If so, what brings those feelings out?		
Activities geared towards certain groups	3	1
Not into party scene, religious	2	2

All of the students agreed that they feel like they have to prove themselves due to their race. They said that they go about this behavior by trying to do the best they can to break the stereotypes. Table 4.17 represents the content analysis of this question.

Table 4.17

Do you Feel that you Have to Prove Yourself due to Your Race or Ethnicity?

Theme	Frequency	Rank
Yes	7	1
If so, how do you go about doing it?		
Standing out	7	1

Research Question 5: What recommendations do African American undergraduates make on involving and engaging all students at Rowan University?

The students in the focus group often mentioned that a lot of the activities on campus excluded minority groups. African American students would probably feel more involved with campus life if some of the events were more diverse. Also, it was mentioned on many occasions that it seems as if professors had lower expectations of African American students. This feeling makes students feel marginalized and uneasy. In addition, it was implicated that majority groups are not educated on the inequality that minority groups face. This lack of knowledge also creates an uneasy feeling for African American students.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

The study investigated the student involvement and engagement patterns of selected African American undergraduate students at Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ, during the Spring 2008 semester. The study was designed to assess the impact of involvement and engagement patterns. Participants in this study ranged from freshmen to seniors and were open to all undergraduate majors.

A survey was administered to a convenience sample of 163 African American undergraduate students. The first part of the survey consisted of a 30-item Likert-type items regarding student engagement. The second part of the survey consisted of student involvement questions that inquired about the importance and satisfaction levels from the students' perspective. After the surveys were administered, seven subjects volunteered to participate in a follow-up focus group.

Descriptive statistics and correlations were used to analyze data from the completed surveys. Variations in the involvement and engagement levels were explored using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Significant statistical differences were determined using Person calculations. Focus group data were analyzed using content analysis looking for common and divergent themes.

Discussion of the Findings

The highest rated survey items for engagement were using email to communicate with a professor, asking questions in class or contributing to class discussions, discussing grades or assignments with professors and, working with other students on projects during class. These findings support the work of Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005) who claim such activities contribute to a student's success and personal development. Active and collaborative learning is associated with student success and engagement (Kuh et al., 2005). Adequate academic atmosphere, academic advising, and faculty availability outside of the classroom were rated as the most important items of the involvement items which support the findings of Astin (1993). The "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) also support these findings.

There were moderate positive relationships between cumulative GPA and holding an internship, teaching or tutoring other students, and making a class presentation. These findings support the research of Astin (1997) and Kuh, Pace, and Vesper (1997), and Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt's (2005) research. The researchers claim that active and cooperative learning are among the best predictors of gains in student success.

The study did not find many differences in engagement and involvement between genders. When examining the differences in responses between genders, the only moderate significant differences were in the survey items of participated in intramural athletics, importance of having a job while enrolled level, and importance of academic advising. There were also many significant weak negative relationships in survey

responses by gender. This suggests that involvement and engagement rates do not substantially vary when gender is the independent variable.

In previous research, Astin (1997) found that majoring in specific fields of study can potentially impact a student's level of involvement. For example, majoring in business will have negative effects on altruism, social activism, and self-reported growth in cultural awareness. This study does not support these findings. There were weak relationships between major/expected major and levels of student involvement and engagement.

Previous research indicates that student interaction with faculty has many positive correlations with student development (Astin, 1997). This finding appears to be prevalent in all racial/ethnic groups (Fischer, 2007). This study supports these claims. Not only was there a relationship between interactions with faculty, but students who lived on campus or close to the campus reported having higher satisfaction levels with faculty.

This study found that African American students who belonged to a social fraternity or sorority were more active in campus life than other students. There were positive relationships between belonging to a fraternity or sorority and participating in student government, participating in social clubs, and holding an internship. Astin (1997) reported that belonging to a fraternity or sorority did not have any impact on student satisfaction outcomes but does have a positive effect on self-reported growth in leadership abilities.

The focus group reported that the younger students sought older peers for advice while the upperclassmen students sought faculty or advisors for advice. This finding supports Astin's (1997) research that the student's peer group is the most powerful source

of influence on growth and development during the college years. Also, many students in the focus group reported that they felt they had lower expectations from professors and the majority group does not seem to understand the natural hardships African American students face which can serve as a distraction. This supports the work of Kuh, Pace, and Vesper (1997) who say that perceptions of the institutional environment influences academic success at undergraduate institutions. Also, the group reported that a lot of the activities at Rowan University are not directed towards minorities. Bourke (1997) found a similar finding in his research.

Conclusions

The results of this study confirm and differ from previous related studies. Results from this study indicate that to best understand involvement and engagement experiences of African American students, it is best to conduct studies that center around that population. Some findings of the study support previous research. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005) claim that most effective practices of student engagement include faculty involvement of collaborative learning in and out of the classroom. Astin (1997) also claimed that students who have positive interactions with faculty demonstrate higher rates of involvement than others. The highest rated survey items were using email to communicate with a professor, asking questions in class or contributing to class discussions, discussing grades or assignments with professors, and working with other students on projects during class. The ratings for these items show the importance of the items on student success.

Also, holding an internship, making class presentations, and tutoring students were reported as items that have a positive relationship with African American students'

GPA. It is logical that these items are correlated with higher GPAs, because making class presentations and tutoring students demonstrate a true understanding of course material while holding an internship expresses a student's desire to have better chances of obtaining a career of interest. These items represent active and collaborative learning and many researchers believe that these are among the best predictors in student success.

This study found no major differences in the student involvement and engagement between African American male and female students. This was a surprising finding because of the gender gap between the African American males and females. The study suggests that involvement and engagement on campus does not correlate with the gender gap.

The study further validates that the professors' perception of African American students affect these students' learning in the classroom. Many previous studies reported that instructors had lower expectations for minority students, and students reported that this served as a distraction in attaining education. Steps must be taken to help alleviate this issue, because of its validation in repeated studies.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented:

1. Campuses should have activities that cater to and attract all ethnic groups.
2. Through race relations and diversity classes, other students can be informed of the natural disadvantages that minority groups face in the United States.
3. Professors should be aware of the covert lowered expectations that may arise toward African American students and take steps to alleviate this bias.

4. Steps should be taken to engage African American students in collaborative and active learning inside and outside the classroom.
5. Mentorship programs that allow African American students to interact with faculty members should continue to be established and developed.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented:

1. A follow-up analysis of the younger students in the focus group should be conducted to see if their views follow the research trends as they advance in their college career.
2. Studies that expand to outside a public predominantly white state institution can be conducted.
3. Series of interviews with larger numbers can be conducted to gain better insight.
4. A longitudinal study can be completed assessing and monitoring the experiences of African American undergraduate students as they enter college and follows their progress throughout the four year college experience.
5. Further studies with a random population to confirm the findings of this study.

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APPENDIX A

Survey of Student Involvement and Engagement

SURVEY OF STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

This survey is being administered as part of a master's degree research project. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly confidential and no personally identifiable information is being requested.

Background Information

Please mark all that apply Example: [x]

What is your age?

- ☐ 18 & Under
- ☐ 19 to 20
- ☐ 21 to 22
- ☐ 23 & Older

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Are you a full-time or part-time student?

- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Part-time

What class are you in?

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior

What is your Cumulative GPA?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4.0 to 3.7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3.6 to 3.4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3.3 to 3.0 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2.9 to 2.7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2.6 to 2.4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2.3 to 2.0 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1.9 to 1.7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1.6 to 1.4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1.3 & Below |

Print your major(s) or expected major(s) below:

Do you identify yourself as Black or African American?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What is the highest level of completed education for your parents?

Father

Mother

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Didn't finish high school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Graduated from high school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Some college |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Completed Associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Completed Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Completed Master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Completed Doctorate degree (Ph.D, J.D., M.D., etc.) |

Involvement/Engagement Information

SECTION I

In your experience at Rowan University, about how often have you done each of the following? Mark your answers in the boxes. Example: [x]

		Very Often	Often	Some times	Never
1.	Participated in intramural athletics	[]	[]	[]	[]
2.	Participated in student government	[]	[]	[]	[]
3.	Participated in university publication	[]	[]	[]	[]
4.	College productions or performances	[]	[]	[]	[]
5.	Participated in professional or departmental clubs	[]	[]	[]	[]
6.	Participated in social clubs	[]	[]	[]	[]
7.	Participated in residence hall activities	[]	[]	[]	[]
8.	Participated in religious organizations	[]	[]	[]	[]
9.	Volunteer service	[]	[]	[]	[]
10.	Participated in leadership programs	[]	[]	[]	[]
11.	Off-campus part-time job	[]	[]	[]	[]
12.	On-campus part-time job	[]	[]	[]	[]
13.	Held an internship	[]	[]	[]	[]
14.	Participated in field experience	[]	[]	[]	[]
15.	Participated in independent study	[]	[]	[]	[]
16.	Worked with classmates outside of class	[]	[]	[]	[]
17.	Tutored or taught other students	[]	[]	[]	[]
18.	Participated in community-based projects as part of class	[]	[]	[]	[]
19.	Attended an art exhibit, gallery, play, or dance	[]	[]	[]	[]
20.	Exercised or participated in physical activities	[]	[]	[]	[]
21.	Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	[]	[]	[]	[]
22.	Discussed ideas with faculty members	[]	[]	[]	[]
23.	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	[]	[]	[]	[]
24.	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	[]	[]	[]	[]
25.	Made a class presentation	[]	[]	[]	[]
26.	Included diverse perspectives in class discussions/assignments	[]	[]	[]	[]
27.	Worked with other students on projects during class	[]	[]	[]	[]

		Very Often	Often	Some times	Never
28.	Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	[]	[]	[]	[]
29.	Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor	[]	[]	[]	[]
30.	Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	[]	[]	[]	[]
31.	Are you member of a social fraternity or sorority?	[]	Yes	[]	No
32.	Have you participated in study abroad program?	[]	Yes	[]	No
33.	Are you an EOP student?	[]	Yes	[]	No

SECTION II

The following questions have two parts. First rate how important each item is to you by circling one of the numbers from 1 – 5. Second, rate how satisfied you are with each item by circling one of the numbers from 1 – 5. Use the following scale.

Importance					Satisfaction				
Very Important				Not at all Important	Very Satisfied				Not at all Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

	Importance					Satisfaction				
Social Involvement										
1. Establishing personal relationships w/ peers at Rowan	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Getting involved in student organizations	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Getting involved in campus activities	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Attending cultural events on campus	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Interacting with students of different races or cultures	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Getting involved in religious activities	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. Having a job while enrolled	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Importance					Satisfaction				
Very Important					Very Satisfied				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

	Importance					Satisfaction				
Academic Involvement										
1. Faculty availability outside of class	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Social contact with faculty	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Academic advising	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Campus Atmosphere										
1. Adequate personal security	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Adequate physical environment on campus	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Adequate social atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Adequate academic atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Fitting into campus community	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION III

Mark the box that best represents your relationship with people at Rowan University:

a. Relationships with other students

Unfriendly, Unsupportive					Friendly, Supportive				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5					6

b. Relationships with faculty members

Unfriendly, Unsupportive					Friendly, Supportive				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5					6

SECTION IV

Which of the following best describes where you are living? (Mark One)

- ☐ Residence hall or other campus housing
☐ Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within walking distance
☐ Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within driving distance

Thank you for your participation in this survey. If you are interested in participating in a Focus Group as part of a follow-up to the survey, please contact the researcher through email, piperk97@students.rowan.edu, or by phone, (856) 256 – 6458. Thank you.

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Protocol

1. What is life like at Rowan University?
2. Tell me about a typical Friday night.
3. Who do you talk to for advice at Rowan University?
4. Who do you socialize with?
 - a. Do those people change based on the setting on campus?
5. Are you active in any organizations or activities on campus?
 - a. What does your activity entail?
6. Is Rowan University welcoming to you as a member of a minority group?
7. Do you feel at home at Rowan University?
8. Do you ever feel that you are an outsider here?
 - a. If so, what brings those feelings out?
9. Do you feel that you have to prove yourself here due to your race or ethnicity?
 - a. If so, how do you go about doing that?

APPENDIX C

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



January 2, 2008

Keron Piper
Rowan University, Box 1866
200 Mullica Hill Road
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Keron Piper:

In accordance with the University's IRB policies and 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to inform you that the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your project:

IRB application number: 2008-091

Project Title: Student Involvement and Engagement: An Investigation of its Impact on African American Undergraduate Success in College

In accordance with federal law, this approval is effective for **one calendar year** from the date of this letter. If your research project extends beyond that date or if you need to make significant modifications to your study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with our office regarding this research.

Please retain copies of consent forms for this research for three years after completion of the research.

If, during your research, you encounter any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, you must report this immediately to the Associate Provost for Research (856-256-4053).

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Heiser (heiser@rowan.edu or 856-256-4167).

Sincerely,

Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.
Chair, Rowan University IRB

c: Sisco, Burton, Educational Leadership, Education Hall

Office of the Associate Provost for Research
Memorial Hall
201 Mullica Hill Road
Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701

856-256-4053
856-256-4425 fax

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Rowan University

Principle Investigator: Keron Piper, M.A. Higher Education Administration Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership

I agree to participate in a study entitled “Student Involvement and Engagement: An Investigation of its Impact on African American Undergraduate Success in College,” which is being conducted by Keron Piper, a M.A. Higher Education Administration candidate at Rowan University.

The purpose of this portion of the study is to further investigate the impact of student involvement and engagement through a focus group that consists of African American male and female undergraduate students. The data collected in the focus group will be combined with data from the surveys and analyzed.

I understand that I am expected to participate in a discussion with other focus group members about my in-class and extracurricular activities experience at Rowan University. My participation in the study should not exceed one hour.

I understand that my responses will be confidential and that all data gathered will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study, I may contact Keron Piper at (856) 256 – 6458.

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Participant0

(Date)

APPENDIX E

Content Analysis Rules and Procedures for Logical Analysis of Written Data

RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR LOGICAL ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN DATA

The following decisions were made regarding what was to be the unit of data analysis (Sisco, 1981):

1. A phrase or clause will be the basic unit of analysis
2. Verbiage not considered essential to the phrase or clause will be edited out- e.g., articles of speech, possessives, some adjectives, elaborate examples.
3. Where there is violation of convention syntax in the data it will be corrected.
4. Where there are compound thoughts in a phrase or clause, each unit of thought will be represented separately (unless one was an elaboration of another.)
5. Where information seems important to add to the statement in order to clarify it in a context, this information will be added to the unit by parentheses.

The following decisions were made regarding the procedures for the categorization of content units.

1. After several units are listed on a sheet of paper, they will be scanned in order to determine differences and similarities.
2. From this tentative analysis, logical categories will be derived from the units.
3. When additional units of data suggest further categories, they will be added to the classification scheme.
4. After all the units from a particular question responses are thus classified, the categories are further reduced to broader clusters (collapsing of categories.)

5. Frequencies of the units in each cluster category are determined and further analysis steps are undertaken, depending on the nature of the data-i.e., ranking of categories with verbatim quotes which represent the range of ideas or opinions (p.177).

